



THE URBAN/SUBURBAN DUCK

Each year, people are amazed to see ducks and ducklings in the most unlikely places, such as walking single file through city streets or nesting under bank teller windows! Luckily, ducklings are precocious and mature quickly. From late February and into August, Animal Care Services receives many phone calls from residents who are concerned about the well-being of ducks who have selected, what appear to be, strange locations to nest and raise their young. Many calls are received regarding a mother duck and ducklings crossing the road, or ducks nesting around a backyard swimming pool. Some calls are from residents who feel the presence of ducks at a private residence is a nuisance, and should be removed. This information is intended to help explain duck behavior, the laws protecting ducks and other migratory birds, and how to determine if a duck should be impounded for health and safety reasons.

There are many species of ducks that migrate through the Southern California area. The most common species is the Mallard. During breeding season, males have a beautiful, glossy green head with a narrow white collar. They have a chestnut breast, a white tail, yellow bill and orange feet. The females look completely different—mottled brown with a whitish tail. A female's bill is dark and patched with orange and their feet are orange. They, as well as the males, have a prominent violet blue stripe bordered with white on the lower edge of their wings.

During January and February, mates are chosen and nesting areas are located. Mallards usually nest close to water. In urban areas, this means ponds, swimming pools, fountains, flood control channels and even very unusual locations. After nesting, both the male and female stay near the nest to defend it. Females usually lay about 8-10 eggs. After four weeks, the eggs hatch and the mother will take the ducklings to water, even if it means walking across a busy intersection.

Females will aggressively protect their young so the entire brood should be avoided. In 10-12 weeks, the ducklings can sustain flight and will soon fly away and join other ducks who have completed the cycle.

Federal law strictly prohibits interfering with nesting ducks. Heavy fines are levied against anyone who violates the Federal Migratory Waterfowl Act. Once a nest is made, it cannot be interfered with and nature must be allowed to take its course. If a pair has selected your yard in which to nest, enjoy this natural occasion and in a few short weeks, the ducks and ducklings will be gone. If your pool is selected as a water source, place a screen in front of your filter opening so the ducklings will not be harmed and enjoy the show.



Should a mother duck and ducklings be crossing a busy street, Animal Care Services should be contacted so both human life and the ducks can be protected.

Animal Care Services will respond to and impound any duck that is:

- **Injured/Sick/Dead**

If any of these conditions exist, please call City of Long Beach Animal Care Services at:

(562) 570-7387